

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

DON. MARCO AURELIO SOTO

PRESIDENT OF

HONDURAS.

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

— AND —

BOARD OF TRADE,

— OF —

SAN FRANCISCO,

On FRIDAY, JUNE 22d, 1883.



DON. MARCO AURELIO SOTO

PRESIDENT OF

HONDURAS.

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

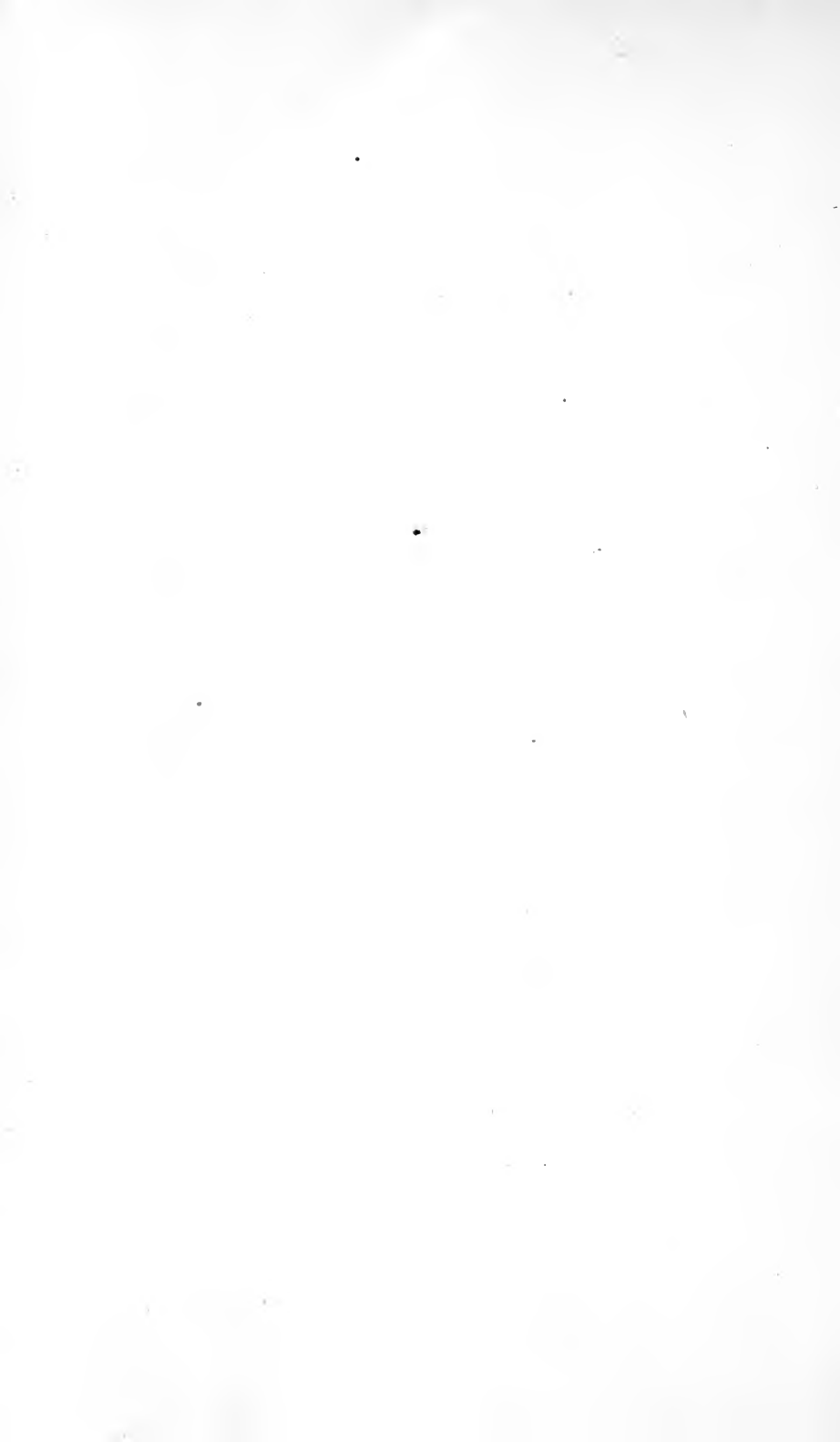
— AND —

BOARD OF TRADE,

— OF —

SAN FRANCISCO,

On FRIDAY, JUNE 22d 1883.



NOTICE.

San Francisco, June 21st, 1883.

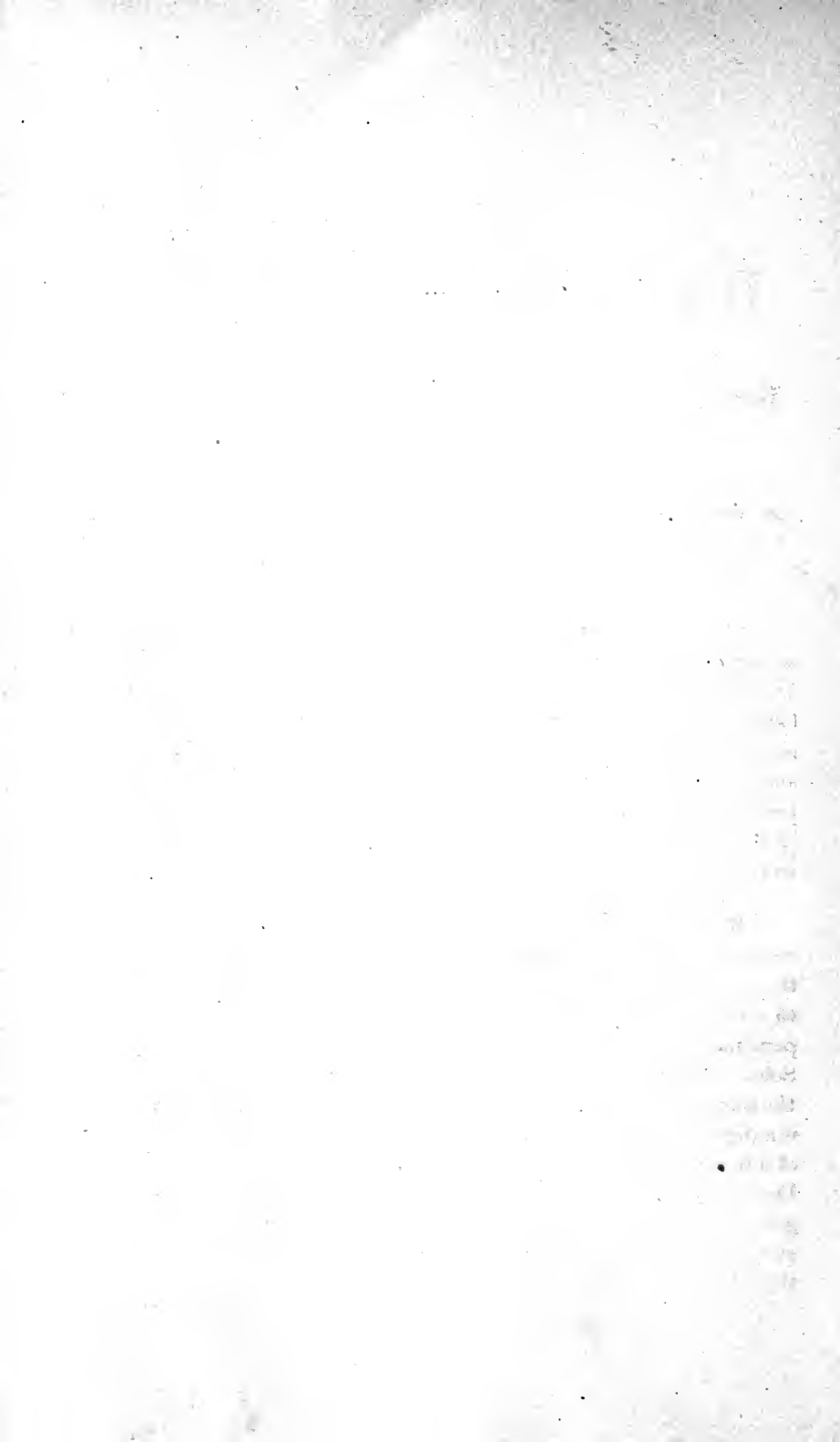
The members of the
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE and the *BOARD OF TRADE*
are invited to the Chamber of Commerce on Fri-
day afternoon, June 22d, at 3 o'clock, to meet
DON. MARCO AURELIO SOTO, President of the Repub-
lic of Honduras, who will address the meeting.

HORACE DAVIS,

President Chamber of Commerce.

JACOB S. TABER,

President Board of Trade.



DON. MARCO AURELIO SOTO.

Reception to the President of Honduras
June 22d, 1883.

A Hearty Welcome to the Distinguished Visitor—His
Address to the Business Men of San Francisco.

“In response to an invitation from the Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of this city, Don. Marco Aurelio Soto, President of the republic of Honduras, delivered an address before the merchants of San Francisco, at the rooms of the first-named body, yesterday afternoon. There was a large attendance. President Soto was escorted to the rooms by Horace Davis, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and Jacob S. Taber, president of the Board of Trade. The American and Honduras flags were draped over the central seat, occupied by President Soto.

Mr. Davis, in opening the meeting, stated it was called in response to an invitation from the two representative bodies of the merchants of San Francisco to the distinguished gentleman to address them. Mr. Davis paid a high compliment to the personal character and the administrative abilities of Señor Soto. That gentleman was then introduced by Mr. Davis, and the honored guest was received with applause. His Excellency is a dignified, fine looking gentleman, and he spoke with the ease of a finished orator. The address was delivered in Spanish. Mr. Davis afterward reading a translation. There were numerous gentlemen in the audience who understood Spanish, and they gave many manifestations of applause during the delivery of the address.”

"President Soto then addressed the merchants assembled, among whom were a goodly sprinkling of Spaniards. His address was delivered in a dignified and pleasing manner, and Spaniards who heard it said it was a fine oratorical effort. We give below a literal translation of the President's speech.

—*San Francisco Merchant.*

GENTLEMEN: I regret that I cannot speak English with the perfection required to address in that beautiful language such a distinguished and respectable audience as is here congregated. This reason has obliged me to get it translated into your idiom. The brief information I give you is of the natural richness of Honduras and of its present situation, economic and political. But before it is read, allow me to address you briefly upon the importance that, in my opinion, ought to be given to the commercial relations of this country with the republics of Central America, which unfortunately are very little known, and frequently are unfairly judged.

The American Union causes astonishment to the world by her liberal institutions and growing progress. All exporting nations are obliged to look for the most suitable markets for their productions. In my belief the markets that have the best conditions for the exporting trade of the United States are undoubtedly those of Spanish America. Among others are foremost those of Central America, which, by their geographical position are destined to be the most active centres of trade on the American Continent.

Honduras is close to the United States, and this circumstance is a further reason to increase the commercial relations between both countries. From New York to Port Cortes is 1,750 miles, and the time occupied 146 hours. New Orleans is three or four days from Trufillo, and the fine port of Amapala, in the bay of Fonseca, is distant 148 hours from this opulent city, rightly called the "Queen of the Pacific." When the trans-continental railroad from Port Cortes to the bay of Fonseca is built; when that happy thought shall be realized, which had its origin in the mind of an illustrious son of this country, Mr.

Squires, who will always live in the hearts of the Hondurian people, then Honduras will serve as an entreport to facilitate communication between the ports of the United States on the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans.

American enterprise, which works here so many wonders, begins to extend beyond the limits of the United States. The spirit of enterprise started in Mexico must follow to Central America, and extend itself to South America as a fruitful inundation, which will diffuse with it light, life and civilization.

Honduras offers to the industrious sons of the United States its wide and fruitful fields, adapted to all agricultural purposes; offers to them its mineral treasures, which are almost unexplored, its navigable rivers, and magnificent ports. In a word, it offers to them its rich and numerous natural products, its valuable raw material, and its magnificent coast, bathed by both oceans. Each nation is in need of intercourse with other nations. What is produced in one country is not produced in another. Hence the interchange; therefore commerce.

Here there is a want of tropical products, which grow almost spontaneously in Honduras. There you can obtain them to great advantage. We need the products of your industry. Bring them to our markets, and there we shall offer you the most favorable terms.

I wish to invite American enterprise to my country. I am certain they would obtain the most favorable consideration. I wish this, because for me to work for the enhancement of commercial relations is to work for the progress of humanity. Commerce ought to be protected—ought to be fostered. It is a peaceful agent, but the most civilizing. It binds man to man; amalgamates the races in a single community, and invites them to live in universal fraternity.

Gentlemen, I do not wish to speak further in a language so little known to you. Allow me only, in conclusion, to state that I offer the most fervent prayers for the progress and pros-

perity of this hospitable country—this great Republic—classic land of Liberty, and the mother of him whom free men of all countries should worship—the mother of him who was “First in peace, first in war, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

After the applause which greeted the speech had subsided, Mr. Davis read a statement, prepared in the English language, of President Soto's views, as follows:

GENTLEMEN:—It is a satisfaction and an honor to me to comply with your wishes, by giving you some information concerning the actual condition of the Republic of Honduras.

Honduras is one of the five States, which originally formed the confederation of Central America, dissolved in 1840. It lies between 83.20° and 89.30° west longitude, and 13.10° and 16° north latitude. It comprises 39,600 square miles, thus forming an area approximately equal to that of the State of Ohio. It is bounded on the north and east by the Bay of Honduras and the Caribbean Sea, the coast extending from the mouth of the Rio Pinto, 15.45° north latitude, and 18.30° west longitude up to the Cape of Gracias á Dios, at the mouth of the River Segovia. This line of coast extends for 400 miles. On the south Honduras is bounded by the Republic of Nicaragua, and the Gulf of Fonseca, within which there are a number of admirable ports; and on the west and southwest by the Republics of Salvador and Guatemala.

The advantageous situation of Honduras in Central America, its excellent ports on both seas, and the great Valleys of Goascoran and Humuya, and that of Ulua, which crosses the country, suggested the idea of an interoceanic railway, which was begun some years ago, under the management, and with the capital of Americans. This enterprise has had some lamentable drawbacks, but at the present time occupies the attention of the country, the population of which believes in, and hopes for its full realization. A company has been formed to complete the enterprise and it is incorporated under the laws

of the state of New York. As is well known, such a railway would secure an easy, convenient, cheap and safe means of communication between the Eastern States and California, and the Republics of Central America, particularly Honduras. This has been the principal object aimed at in its construction.

To attend to this important enterprise and to give it all possible aid, is within the ample powers with which Congress has invested me; and this is perhaps the principal object of my visit to the United States.

There are few States so greatly favored by Nature as Honduras, so fitted to attain a high development, and to support a large population of intelligent and industrious people. The products of all countries and climates may be brought to perfection there, and may be carried by its rivers to both seas; its bays, ports and excellent anchorage in the Gulfs of Honduras and Fonseca, giving every possible facility for the exportation of agricultural and economical products through easy and convenient outlets.

Since the earliest times its gold and silver mines have been deemed its greatest wealth; indeed the whole country may be considered mineral in character. Although aided by but little capital,—and using antiquated processes, the mines have still been the basis of commerce; while at present the state of the mining industry is rapidly improving. Several companies have been, and are now being organized in the United States, to work our mines on a large scale. At present there are being worked the mines at Rosario, those at Yusecan in the Departments of Tegucigalpa and El Paraiso, and those of Santa Cruz, and Gamalote in the Department of Santa Barbara. All these mines produce gold and silver, and the ores are of high grade.

It is one of the most remarkable geological characteristics of Honduras that the spurs of the Cordilleras trending toward the Pacific are rich in veins of ore, which thus invite exploita-

tion on a large scale by the inhabitants of the Pacific States of the North American Republic, where mining industry has been carried almost to perfection, and has laid the foundation of great fortunes.

Liberal laws and liberal regulations have been issued in Honduras, to foster the mining industries. Besides the mining Code, which is in itself a complete body of legislation, based on the best models of other countries, and inspired by liberal ideas, an additional decree has been issued declaring free from all duties the exportation of silver, copper, and other metals and the importation of all kinds of machinery and materials for the working and beneficiation of the mines. Other concessions intended to stimulate this branch of industry have also been made.

I think that no mining enterprise in Honduras, carried on with sufficient capital, intelligence and good faith can fail to produce considerable profit.

There is one point to which I must call your attention, and that is the abundance of miners in Honduras. The Hondurian miner or prospector is daring and active, and endowed with a sagacity almost instinctive in determining the grade of ores and the proper methods for their treatment. European and American mineralogists can not refrain from enthusiastic admiration for the qualities of the Hondurian laborer.

According to our laws, property in mines is acquired gratuitously by the simple act of recording a claim, and making a survey, there being no discrimination between natives and foreigners. The condition of agriculture is behind the age and some of our rich lands remain unproductive for want of means of communication. On the coasts however where sugar-cane, indigo, and cotton grow almost spontaneously, the inconveniences met with in the interior of the country are absent, and almost any agricultural enterprise might succeed.

During the war of secession in the United States great plantations of cotton were made on our Pacific Coast. That cotton obtained the highest prices in the European markets, on account of its quality. The land being incomparably rich, and being granted gratis to the agriculturalist, while labor is extremely abundant, the cultivation of cotton might be undertaken on a large scale. All kinds of machinery could be transported without difficulty on the rivers Goascoran, Nacaome and Choluteca, or by wagons, this coast region being completely level.

The cotton which has been raised on the Atlantic Coast has been considered equal, if not superior in quality, to that of the United States. Several trials, confirming this assertion have been made in the beautiful valley of San Pedro Sula.

The sugar-cane, both on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, grows so vigorously and luxuriantly that it does not require replanting for many years. I believe that no kind of cultivation could be easier or more productive than that of the sugar-cane on the Pacific Coast. Among the products I should not fail to mention the India-rubber and the Sarsaparilla, both very abundant and the last considered the best in the world.

The building and dye woods form another source of wealth in Honduras, Cedar, Log-wood and Mahogany grow with great luxuriance on the shores of the Gulf of Fonseca. A considerable traffic is kept up between Amapala, France and England in Log-wood alone. On the northern coast Mahogany has been cut for many years, and in latter years a considerable trade in fruits has been developed between the islands of the Bay in the Gulf of Honduras and our northern coast, and the eastern portions of the United States, Bananas, Cocoanuts, Limes, etc., are cultivated on a large scale in these regions owing to the increasing demand, and there are lines of steamers employed in the fruit trade between Honduras and this country.

There is another industry just now being tried on our Atlantic Coast; i. e. the cultivation of fibrous plants, which are

very abundant in Honduras, where one American fibre company has been at work for several years,—while a second is just erecting machinery in Puerto Cortes. It will be long before these companies will have to expend anything in planting, for hundreds and hundreds of square miles of the country are natural plantations.

Cattle raising forms another productive branch of industry in Honduras, and crossing the native stock with improved breeds is an object which the Government has in view. The farmers of California set a good example to those of Honduras in this respect.

In order to stimulate Agriculture and Stock-raising extremely liberal laws have been enacted. The acquisition of lands is gratuitous and easy, and the farmers have been granted all the exemptions necessary to their industry.

There is in Honduras, as in all Central America, a strong desire to attract thither American industry and capital. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the sympathy and admiration felt by the people of these Republics for the more advanced cultivation of the United States. With this happy unanimity of ideas, sentiments and aspirations, nothing would be easier than to make their commercial relations increasingly profitable and active. The rich Honduranian mines, and the wonderful agricultural capacities of the country offer vast fields of industry to American capitalists. And I should be very happy if my visit to America should bring my country and yours into closer and more profitable relations.

Honduras, as well as Mexico, and the other Republics of Central and Southern America, has been much afflicted by civil war; and has not, therefore, been able to reach that degree of prosperity and civilization to which its position and natural wealth entitle it. But it is six years since all this has been changed for the better in my country; and now it is able to offer an immense field for enterprise, and with highly desir-

able political prospects. During the six and a half years of my administration, peace has been unbroken, order has been re-established, and quiet confidence exists now throughout the Republic. In Honduras the spirit of enterprise has succeeded to the spirit of revolution. Many industries, mostly undertaken by Americans, have given new life to the country, and new impetus to public spirit. About three months ago the first steamship bearing the United States flag, was seen on the waters of the River Ulua. Several concessions have lately been granted to American citizens for navigation by steam on the Rivers Chamelecon and Blanco, and the Lake of Yojoa, which cannot fail to produce a happy effect on the relations between Honduras and the United States. The last act of my government has made the Custom House regulations more advantageous with regard to all importations. The market for our products is manifestly the United States; and it is equally certain that Central and South America offer in their turn most favorable markets to this country. Reciprocal treaties between us must benefit both, Honduras, although a small country, and in the early days of its prosperity, would not be the last to enter into cordial and generous relations.

In the words of your countryman, Mr. Squier, nature has been munificent in its gifts, and has comprised within the narrow limits of Honduras a variety of climates and products which has no superior in the world.

This country it is which now desires to be received into the community of civilized nations bringing with it its commerce and industry, and offering its inexhaustible treasures to that spirit of enterprise, which transforms and enlarges everything for the benefit of civilization.

I improve this opportunity by offering for your acceptance some copies of Mr. Squier's book, in which he describes the States of Central America and Honduras both vividly and correctly. This book will tell you of my country better than my hasty description can do, and I will at the same time lay

before you my last Message to Congress, which is a complete photograph of the actual state of the country.

Gentlemen, I close by expressing to you my gratitude for the interest which you have manifested in Honduras, and by assuring you that I shall gladly furnish you with all the special information which you may desire, in regard to its natural advantages, and the means of making yet closer the relations between our respective countries.

“When the applause which greeted the conclusion of the address had subsided, Mr. C. J. Dempster took the floor and delivered an address of welcome to their distinguished guest and expressed the hope that reciprocal benefits might result from a closer intercourse between the two countries. . . Capt. W. L. Merry followed Mr. Dempster, in a few remarks, and moved a vote of thanks to President Soto for the great amount of valuable information his address had furnished the members of the two commercial bodies of San Francisco. President Taber seconded the motion and the vote was given unanimously. The meeting then adjourned and an informal levee was held by President Soto, who cordially greeted all the gentlemen present. It is also learned that a large part of the collection now on exhibition at the State Mining Bureau will be left in this city, only a few specimens being taken East.”—*Morning Call*.

SAN FRANCISCO, June 22d, 1883.



